

THE CHRISTMAS BELLS.

THE midnight stars
shine overhead
With more than
usual brightness;
The hills and valleys
are arrayed
In robes of dazzling
whiteness;
And forest sprays of frost and rime
To forest boughs are clinging;
And sweet the anthem and sublimo
The Christmas bells are ringing.
It wakes old memories again;
The vanished past is nigh us;
We feel new old bliss, old pain,
And long-lost friends are by us—
Friends who have reached the better land,
Friends who have never faltered
In friendship e'en around us stand
With friends estranged and altered.
And voices silent long we hear
Sweet words of pardon speaking;
And other voices reach our ear,
Our words of pardon seeking;
The wrongs we met too trivial seem
To merit angry feeling;
The wrongs we did we greater deem
While Christmas bells are pealing.
And we forget to scheme and plan
While Christmas bells are telling
Of him who came in guise of man
On earth to claim a dwelling.
The sweet bells sounding near and far
Calm, holy thoughts are bringing,
And Heaven and earth the nearer are
While Christmas bells are ringing.
—Chambers Journal.

A FEW CIPHERS.

HERE! That's off my mind
for another year.
Mr. March gave an impatient
little frown to the last sheet in a series
of letters he had been writing. Short
and stereotyped they were—all running
much like this:

"DEAR —: Inclosed find a trifle in remembrance
of the day, with good wishes
for all.
Affectionately,
JOHN MARCH."

"It's a kind of nuisance," went on Mr. March, as he gazed at five checks which lay on his desk with the letters, each one dashed off and left to dry while the others were written. "I don't know—really, I don't—why I should keep it up year after year. There are some things which might be considered outgrown as time goes on, and this is one of them."

Still Mr. March had a feeling that it would not be discontinued, this every-Christmas offering of a small sum of money to each one of his kindred; it was too firmly based on old association. With the passage of the years he had grown apart from them; his interests and theirs had become widely separated, and yet he could not well have persuaded himself to sever this almost only link which bound him to the members of his own family.

It had begun soon after he had left home and come up to the great city in search of the fortune which had finally crowned his efforts. He had done well from the first; and, even now, as he gazed upon the five checks, he recalled with a slight warmth at his heart the first time he had sent home gifts of money. They had been smaller then; a dollar each to three cousins, five dollars each to his brother and sister. What a stir they had made in the family. John could easily realize the feeling of opulence which it spread over his home roof and that of his uncle living near. Later he had enlarged the gift. Brother, sister and cousins had married and set up homes of their own. None of them had, like himself, prospered abundantly; and when first John March had written out three checks for ten dollars and two for twenty-five, he still knew the rejoicing they would carry into families in which money was scarce.

He had rejoiced in doing it, all the more that a little effort and self-denial had been necessary accompaniments of the gifts. That was many years ago. Time and circumstances had built up walls between him and his relatives, and the old heartiness of good will was wanting.

"It is really time I was letting it go." A thought crossed him of how good the bit of money still came to its recipients. "But I'm under no obligations to keep it up. I have made my money—they had the same chance. Their lives are what they have made them, just as mine is what I have made it. They expect help from me, and they have no right to."

He fretfully recalled the time when it had been represented to him that unless the brother who still held the old homestead had a lift of a few hundred dollars the place would pass out of his hands. It had been given, and that was the end of any trouble from David. With his sister it had been worse. She had made an unfortunate marriage, and then been widowed. Meek and mild in her disposition, she had never directly applied to him except when

in extremities, but was given to keeping her burdens and struggles before him in a way which he sometimes found exasperating.
Cousin Tom had been a seapegrace—always in trouble, always looking for some one to help him out and set him going again on the basis of many promises of better things. Cousin Harvey was the possessor of a large family and small everything else. It was not so very long since Mr. March had helped him out west, finishing his assistance with the suggestion that in future it would be agreeable that he should keep his difficulties to himself. Cousin Matilda had a sickly family; a wail from her on the subject of pressing doctor's bills was frequently heard.

"No," resumed Mr. March, as he folded one of the checks, "people have no right to inflict their misfortunes on some one else just because he has achieved success where they have failed. —That you, Mike?"
"It's meself, sor. Ready to shut up when you say the word."
"I'll take the key myself. I'm not quite done yet, but you needn't wait."

Mike, however, showed no hurry to leave, but busied himself about the room with occasional glances at Mr. March.
"That'll do, Mike," at length said the gentleman, somewhat annoyed by the rattle of shovel and tongs, which seemed to show unusual excitement in Mike. He came slowly toward Mr. March—an undersized figure of an oldish man with a painful limp.

"If I might be thrubblin' ye jist a minnit, sur."
"Goon, Mike; no more lawnsits, hey?"
"No more o' them. It's the funny man ye are, sor." Mike shook his head, his whole insignificant face beaming with delight. "It's only that bein' it's the blessed sayson comin' so near—Christmas eve to-morrow, glory be to God—that I'm axin' a bit o' help o' ye, Muster March, to send a bit of a present to me two brothers, Pat an' Dennis."

"Oh! So you have relatives too, have you?"
"Thanks to the blissid saints I have, sor. An' so I'm comin' to ye to fix up the bits o' paper that'll carry some

dollars you got as damages from the street railway for injuries which have made you a cripple for life?"

"Such amounts" seemed a little bewildering to Mike.
"Would ye be thinkin' I ought to be dividin' aiquil wid 'em, bein' they're me own brothers, sur?" he began.
"Go long with you!" said Mr. March, with a laugh and a stamp of his foot. "Mike," he continued, seriously, "if you do mean such a crazy thing, I hope you will hear me when I advise you against it. Why, man, you are getting old. Your two thousand dollars is almost all your dependence for your old age—for you and your wife."

"It's the ould wife and meself 'll be airtin' this many a year yit, sur, please the Lord."

"But, Mike, think of the difference this money will make in your comfort. With your simple ways it will make years of ease in your life. You can sit by your fire in your own snug hired room, instead of working hard—you with your crippled limb."

The old man set his lips slightly together as he gazed at his employer. Mr. March had once or twice noticed the mildness of the insignificant gray eyes looking out from under lids reddened by exposure; now the mildness was intensified by a smile of rare sweetness.

"Muster March," he said, "I know it all, none better nor meself. I know just how much easier it is to sit by the fire nor to go out in the perishin' cold wid the ache in me ould bones. But ye see, sur, they're me own flesh an' blood—Pat and Dennis. They feel the pinch and the hardness jist like meself. Would it be meself 'ud sit by me fire taddin' me aise knowin' things was harder for them nor for me? Be me pow! Muster March, I'm thinkin' it's the stingy ould rascal I'm bein' not to give them more."

"Mike, you're a fool!" repeated Mr. March, but more quietly than before, and simply to fill in the pause.

"It'll be raichin' 'em the mornin' of the blissid Christmas day," Mike took a few limping steps in growing excitement. "Think of it, sur! It'll be makin' 'em feel rich! It'll bring the smile to their faces, and the laugh to



"IF I MIGHT BE TROUBLIN' YE JIST A MINNIT, SUR."

money to them two—the little mite of a scrap that manes so much." Mike laughed aloud as if in great relish of the subject.

"Check, hey? Well, here," Mr. March again opened his check-book and again began rapidly filling a blank. "To the order of—what's the name?"
"Patrick O'Toole,"—Mike paused a moment as the name was written, then proceeded—"five hun'erd dollars."

"Hey?" Mr. March gave his chair a little jerk and gazed into the thin, freckled face surrounded with its fringe of ill-kept red hair streaked with gray.

"Five hun'erd dollars to Patrick O'Toole," repeated Mike in the deliberate tone of one taking special pains to make himself understood.

"What do you mean, Mike?"
"Jist that I'm after sayin', sur. Five hun'erd dollars to Patrick O'Toole, an' five hun'erd dollars to Dennis O'Toole."

"Out of your damage money?" Mr. March asked, between two short breaths of astonishment.

"That'd be it, sur. Where else would the likes o' me be gettin' five hun'erd dollars?"

"Where, sure enough! Why—" Mr. March gazed at the old janitor with a comical mixture of amazement and friendly contempt. "Why—you ould-fool!"

Mike stood quietly with a broad grin on his face.
"Do you mean to say," went on the gentleman, "that you're going to give such amounts out of the two thousand

'em, God bless 'em! on His own birthday! It'll aise the ache that no one but the blissid Lord an' thimselves knows of."

Yes, there was a radiance added to the gentleness in the faded eyes—a radiance written by a joy of which few in this self-seeking world know the taste.

Without saying more Mr. March wrote the checks, to which the old man added his tremulous signature. As the sound of the limping footsteps died away in the hall, Mr. March turned again to the five checks on his desk.

"They look small—yes, they do." Mechanically he added a cipher to the one nearest him. "That looks better." A cipher was added to each check. "One hundred. Two hundred and fifty. They'll all have to be written over."

Mr. March leaned his head on his hands, less in a hurry to get home than he had thought. The glorified face of the old servant was still before his mind's eye. Mr. March doubted if ever in his life he had looked into a happier one.

"Cutting down his bit of a nest-egg so—the poor old simpleton! Likely enough to end his days in the poorhouse yet."

But it was with a softened smile that the rich merchant thought it. Then his mind ran over his own affairs. Prospered from his first beginnings he had, during these few later years, taken huge strides towards a colossal fortune. Seven figures it would take, he well knew, to express what he was worth, and the initial figure would not be one

of the smaller ones, either. His own family lived well, but not extravagantly; his yearly expenses were but a small proportion of his rapidly increasing yearly income.

"And I've never made anyone feel rich. Old Mike's ahead of me there." With a shrug of his shoulders he drew towards him one of the checks and added to it another cipher.

Rich? There was not one of these families to whom such a check would not come as an angel's gift, with stares and catches of breath, tears of joy from care-burdened elder ones, shouts of delight from youngsters. He knew it all, for he had been poor himself, long ago. "One thousand dollars. Twenty-five hundred dollars."

There was a little excitement about it. Mr. March left his chair and walked up and down the floor. How had it been that he had never before realized what a small scratch of his pen could do? They were his own flesh and blood. They were in one way and another enduring the hardness, the daily and nightly wear of mind, the pitiful, gnawing solicitude which belongs with small means. Soul, mind and body, the hardness touched them all, binding them down with its iron touch, narrowing them with its cruel limitations. His own flesh and blood. They had stood to him as of far less value than this money he had been accumulating—money which could never bring him more than food, clothing and lodging.

Yes, it could. It could bring to him, to his very self, his very heart, the happiness of five families—this rare privilege which he thanked God could come with an easy scratch of his pen.

As he still crossed and recrossed his office floor his movements became quicker, a glow spread over his face, and a new light shone in his eye. At length he sat down and slowly wrote again the checks, lingering over them as over an enjoyable task; and when all were finished each showed still one more cipher.—Sydney Dayre, in Democrat's Magazine.

Generous Little Freddy.

"Freddy," said Mrs. Gazzam to her little boy, about eleven o'clock on Christmas morning, "you ought to be a very happy boy with all these presents that have been sent you."

"Yes'm," replied Freddy, as he pounded his new drum with heavy whacks. "There are a great many little boys who haven't even a single present today."

"Is that so?" asked Freddy. And he gave his watchman's rattle an exasperating twist.

"In the hospital on the next street, Freddy, there are lots of children—poor, sick children, too—who haven't any cousins and uncles and aunts and grandpans to send them nice things."

"I'm sorry for them," said Freddy. And he blew a blast on a shrill horn to display the extent of his sorrow.

"So am I sorry for them, Freddy. Now, would you like to send them something to show what a generous, dear little fellow mamma's boy is?"

"I s'pose so," replied Freddy, in a hesitating tone.

"I thought my little man would want to. He'll feel so glad that he has given pleasure to the poor, sick little boys and girls. Shall I make up a bundle? You really have a great many more toys than you want."

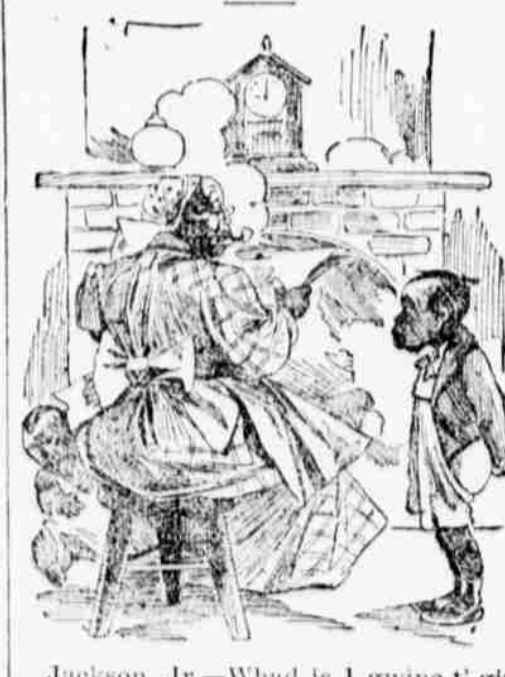
"Yes, mamma."

"Very well. I'll send that big tin horn that your Uncle Tom brought you this morning, and that drum that grandpa told Santa Claus to put in your stocking, and the watchman's rattle that Aunt Sue sent from Oshkosh, and the mouth-organ that you found in your stocking, and that accordion that came from the Wigginses, and the kazoo that Uncle William bought for you."

Freddy demurred a little, but his generosity was at stake.

His noise-makers were bundled off to the hospital, and then Freddy's mamma lay down to take a little nap and get out of her ears the din that had been gathering there since daybreak.—William Henry Siviter, in Puck.

BLESSED BE NOTHING.



Jackson, Jr.—What is I gwine t' git on Chris'mus, mudder?
Mrs. Jackson (ominously)—Nuffin, ef yo' behaves yo'self.—Judge.

Nothing Left for Him.

"How are you going to spend the holidays, old fellow?"
"Not at all. My wife does all the spending for the family."—Atlanta Constitution.

ST. LOUIS WON.

She Secures the National Republican Convention.

The Contest in the Committee Decided on the Fifth Ballot—The Convention Will Be Held June 16—Committee Proceedings.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 11.—The republican national convention will be held at St. Louis on June 16 next. That was the decision reached by the republican national committee yesterday after spirited balloting lasting two hours. The successive ballots were as follows: St. Louis—13, 14, 18, 22, 29; San Francisco—20, 19, 19, 16; Pittsburgh—9, 9, 5, 1, x; Chicago—8, 8, 9, 6; New York—1, x, x, x, x. The morning was spent in hearing speeches in behalf of the contending cities, the doors being open to the various contesting delegations. This concluded, the committee began its afternoon session behind closed doors. An eager crowd choked up the corridors leading to the committee room and awaited the announcement of results.

The first important question of the afternoon was the fixing of the date of the convention. The executive committee reported a resolution favoring June 16. This was amended by Committeeman Lennan, of Utah, in favor of August 18. There was a sharp debate, and Mr. De Young, of California, finally proposed a compromise between June and August, viz., July. The De Young and Lennan amendments were both defeated, and then by a practically unanimous vote the date was fixed at June 16.

Then came the main contest between the cities. There was much excitement as the ballots proceeded, the committeemen from the interested sections hurrying and seeking to effect combinations. At the outset San Francisco secured one more than the nineteen claimed from the first. The announcement of her lead was greeted with enthusiasm when it reached the outer corridors. The strength of St. Louis was somewhat greater than had been expected, while neither Pittsburgh nor Chicago made the showing anticipated. St. Louis gained steadily on each ballot. San Francisco sought to meet this by drawing the votes of Chicago, but without avail. The first serious break occurred when David Martin, of Pennsylvania, led the Pittsburgh forces toward St. Louis. On the fourth and last formal ballot San Francisco broke for the first time, Michigan, Wyoming and Connecticut going to St. Louis. That settled it, and gave St. Louis the convention. The choice was made unanimous on motion of Mr. De Young, of San Francisco.

After concluding the ballot, the committee took up the question of territorial delegates, and recommended that New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Oklahoma each select four delegates in addition to the two heretofore chosen. A hearing was accorded Mrs. J. Ellen Foster, who spoke of woman's influence in behalf of the party.

At 6 o'clock the committee had completed its labors and adjourned. The executive committee then held a brief session to arrange the details of the convention in accordance with the determination of the full committee.

LABOR MATTERS.

Doings of the Labor Congress—Resolutions Adopted.

NEW YORK, Dec. 11.—At yesterday's session of the American Federation of Labor President John McBride was exonerated of the charges that during a strike in Pennsylvania he had accepted a bribe. It became evident early in the day that any attempt on the part of the socialists to run the convention would be nipped in the bud. In fact, the other delegates claimed that any interference whatever on the part of the socialists would be promptly "squelched."

A part of the report of the executive council, which is likely to cause a breeze in the convention, refers to the request of the Trade and Labor assembly of St. Louis that the charter of the Musicians' Mutual Benefit association No. 5,575 be revoked, because the latter organization refused to strike to support the theatrical stage employes. The council refused to revoke the charter and presented this resolution for adoption in its report:

Resolved, That no central body or state federation affiliated with the American Federation of Labor shall have the right to expel or suspend delegates of any local or national union for refusing to violate a contract existing with the employes.

A resolution was agreed to authorizing the executive council to formulate charges against the secretary of the treasury for permitting a violation of the eight-hour law.

To Protect Pensioners.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 11.—Judge Broderick put in another bill on the pension question yesterday, which is far reaching and intended to meet recent conditions arising in the pension business. His bill is to prohibit the malicious intermeddling with pensions and in claims for pensions. It is provided that it shall be unlawful for any officer of the pension bureau or any officer connected with it to institute any official action to affect or suspend any pension, claim on any letter, statement or report from any person regarding a pension or an application for pension, unless the same is in writing and signed by the person making such statements and giving post office address.